

WHY

Why Doesn't God Answer My Prayers?

So Jesus answered and said to the, “Assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but also if you say to this mountain, ‘Be removed and be cast into the sea,’ it will be done. And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive.” Matthew 21:21-22

VIDEO

For the follower of Jesus Christ, it is normal for us to expect our prayers to be answered. But, to be honest, all of us can probably identify with the video. While we may experience answered prayer from time to time, it certainly doesn't seem to be the norm. We usually find a way to explain away unanswered prayers with thoughts such as: “It must not have been God's will” or “God did answer only with a ‘no’ instead of a ‘yes’.” However, the question remains, did not Jesus promise answers to our prayers?

When our prayers seemingly go unanswered, we often become discouraged or even disillusioned. Our prayer life becomes more and more sporadic, and we may even find ourselves doubting the effectiveness of prayer altogether. Sometimes we are told that we must not have enough faith, and therefore begin to feel guilty because of our lack of faith. Oh we try to muster up more faith, but somehow it seems to waver.

1. EFFECTIVE PRAYER IS BASED ON FAITH IN GOD'S PROMISES.

One of the reasons many struggle in this area is that they have a faulty concept of faith. They have been convinced that the promise in our text depends on an earnest feeling that they must somehow muster up from within themselves. If, as

many would have us believe, we would put away all our negative thoughts and focus on the positive, we will receive everything we want. If you want a new job, new car, more money, etc., just name it and claim it.

The problem with this view, besides the obvious feeding of our selfish nature, is that it ignores the biblical idea of faith. True faith must have an object and must be centered on the promises of God.

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. Hebrews 11:1

Faith is living in a hope that is so real it gives absolute assurance. The promises given to the Old Testament saints were so real to them, because they believed God, that they based their lives on them. If we follow a God whose audible voice we have never heard and believe in a Christ whose face we have never seen, we do so because our faith has a reality, a substance, an assurance that is unshakable.

The Old Testament characters who are mentioned in Hebrews 11, that great Hall of Fame for the Faithful, all believed God so much that they based their lives on His words. **By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain... By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death ... By faith, Noah, ...prepared an ark for the saving of his household...By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going...By faith, Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age...**

If you desire to see your prayers answered, you must exercise faith in God's promises. This is not faith in our faith, but rather faith that God will do what He has said He will do.

A lack of faith can be demonstrated in the following ways:

- **A failure to pray**
... Yet you do not have because you do not ask. James 4:2b

Ask, and it will be given to you... Matthew 7:7

If we really believe that God hears and answers prayer, while do we so often fail to take our needs and our worries to Him in prayer?

- **Selfish praying**

You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures. James 4:3

This does not mean that it is wrong to pray for our own personal needs. In fact the very opposite is true. In teaching His disciples to pray, Jesus directed them to pray...

Give us this day our daily bread... Matthew 6:11

It is entirely proper for us to pray for our personal needs, in fact, to do so is to exhibit faith.

- **Weak praying**

The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. James 5:16b

Prayer that is done only as a ritual or is simply “going through the motions” is not a prayer of faith.

And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words. Matthew 6:7

Effective translates the Greek word *energeo* from which we get our word “energy.” The energetic prayers of a righteous man are powerful and are blessed by God.

2. EFFECTIVE PRAYER CAN BE HINDERED

- **Unconfessed sin will hinder our prayers.**

If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear. Psalm 66:18

Behold, the LORD’S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you. So that He will not hear. Isaiah 59:1-2

God does not demand perfection for that would make our communication with Him impossible. But He does call us to examine our lives and confess our sins to Him to experience a continual fellowship with Him.

In Psalm 66, David acknowledges that sin affects his prayer life, yet he also rejoices in the fact that God responds to the prayer of one who is repentant of his sin.

But certainly God has heard me; He has attended to the voice of my prayer. Blessed be God, Who has not turned away my prayer, nor His mercy from me!

- **Wrong relationships with others will hinder our prayers**

Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave you gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. Matthew 5:23-24

We are to do everything within our power to have a right relationship with fellow believers and even those who may not be believers.

If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Romans 12:18

While it takes agreement on both sides of a disagreement to bring total reconciliation, we must always be willing to do our part.

- **Wrong relationships between husbands and wives hinder prayer.**

Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear. ...Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered. 1 Peter 3:1-2, 7

3. EFFECTIVE PRAYER IS A PRIVILEGE FOR THE BELIEVER.

Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Hebrews 4:16

If you are a believer Jesus has made it possible for you to come before God with your requests. Be willing to examine your life to see if there exist any hindrances to your prayers, make those things right before God, and then come before Him with holy boldness.

Our heavenly Father knows what we need before we ask it, yet He still invites us to come to Him with our requests. The more we prayer, the more we will experience the power of God in our lives, and the more He will be glorified.

Someone has said that Satan trembles when the weakest saint is on his knees. He trembles because he knows we have the privilege of communion with God through prayer and that the effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

When Paul spoke of the spiritual warfare all believers experience, he concluded the passage with these words

And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplications in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints. Ephesians 6:17-18

Prayer was never intended to be a “genie in the bottle” for Christians, but rather a means for believers to be victorious in the spiritual battles we all face. When we pray we are recognizing our dependence and trust in God.

Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know. Jeremiah 33:3